

**WP3 Summary Report**  
**The Intercultural Dimension of Education for Democratic**  
**Citizenship in Denmark**  
**The Danish University of Education**

**Objectives**

The objectives of workpackage 3 were to 1) examine the intercultural component of the national official documents that focus on Human Rights and Citizenship Education; 2) To identify different and complementary contributions from projects on this area at the national level; 3) To make a critical analysis of the above based on the relevant bibliography. It was the overall aim of the workpackage to facilitate a comparative analysis of national documents that would provide critical overviews of the intercultural component in official documents and projects focusing on Education for Democratic Citizenship.

**Methodology**

For the analysis of national documents we focused on the concepts referred to in the workpackage description (i.e. human rights, citizenship education and intercultural education). In addition to this we referred to a number of the concepts examined in the analysis of European documents (WP2), i.e. *identity* as well as *multicultural*, *diversity*, *democracy*, *equality*, *inequality*, *peace*, *justice*, *race*, *ethnicity*, *racism*, *xenophobia*, *anti-semitism*, *islamophobia*, *tolerance*, *intolerance*, *responsibility*. As our analysis had to be sensitive to national perspectives, we added concepts of significance to Danish Educational contexts, notably *internationalisation* and *Danish language and culture*.

The focus of the analysis was the definition, context and evolution of concepts associated with specific curricula or general aims in basic education and youth education (till the age of 19).

**The intercultural dimension**

Even though the concept of intercultural education is not often explicitly referred to or conceptualised in aims and curricula, the intercultural and international dimensions of basic and youth education in Denmark are generally present in the aims for history, civics and foreign languages. Policy documents on these subjects represent a broad approach to the intercultural dimension as it is embedded in issues of internationalisation, cultural awareness, citizenship education, human rights education and 'bildung' education. Intercultural education is in these contexts generally associated with the norms, attitudes and values of pupils and 'others', and with the clash, interaction and negotiation between different 'cultures' in or outside schools. These cultures are alternately understood as national cultures (i.e. Danish, French, German etc.), multi-cultures, and local and global cultures that affect and create individuals as well as groups. In language teaching the intercultural dimension is present in the constant references to cultural awareness and to the comparative aspects of cultural understanding allegedly inherent in language education. Though the idea of the nation is rarely directly referred to, the national paradigm is strongly present in official papers on language education, for instance in references to nation-states. This

indicates that whereas the intercultural dimension is generally included and highlighted in aims and acts, it is still generally understood in the context of national paradigms.

So far we can conclude that the intercultural dimension of citizenship education has not really found its way into the official documents dealing with history/civics in the *gymnasium*. The human rights dimension is emphasized more strongly here than in the *folkeskole*. It should be noted that the history/civics guidelines are soon to be reformed.

The intercultural dimension is much stronger underlined in the newly reformed official guidelines of history and civics in the *folkeskole*, even though the term itself is not in use. In the latter it is stated that the pupils should have a solid knowledge of the problems within different cultures, partly to understand the development of Danish society into a multicultural society, partly in preparation for being able to act as democratic citizens. These phrases are remarkable because they signify a conceptual shift within democratic education of the Danish school system. It is the first instance within official guidelines of the *folkeskole* that the Danish society is explicitly acknowledged as a multicultural society. And it is stated that this constitutes the basic socio-cultural precondition for acting as an active democratic citizen. However, the intercultural dimension is not conceptualised within different or competing ideas of intercultural democratic values, even though potentially an option within some formulations.

Internationalisation is a broad term that covers adjustments of educational policies to globalisation, support and improvement of intercultural dimensions in education as well as a critical awareness of human rights and cultural diversity. In internationalisation there is a strong emphasis on the relation of Denmark to other countries, and not as much on intercultural issues within the Danish society itself. Internationalisation is a concept that is generally prioritised in official documents on education in Denmark as internationalisation defines intercultural relations in national terms. Internationalisation is thus a strategy that can be understood as a key to welfare and growth in a society where national belonging and identity is still a significant factor in education and training.

### **Education for citizenship in Denmark 1960-2005**

Denmark has a strong tradition for democracy in education which incorporates a number of citizenship issues even though these are not explicitly conceptualised as 'citizenship education'. Since the 60s democratic education in Denmark had developed historically from being associated with a Christian state and 'community feeling between people' to being embedded in the intercultural context of a democratic nation-state.

Democracy is evident as a value at all levels of the Danish education system, but primarily as a preparation for participatory democracy in society. Official documents underline that schools and classrooms should be democratically organised and democracy is to some extent present in the content of for instance civics and history teaching. Foreign and second language, civics and history are school subjects in which citizenship and intercultural issues are highly represented, though 'intercultural education' is not itself a concept that is widely used in aims, acts and curricula. The

intercultural dimension is discernable in language teaching through the emphasis on comparative cultural awareness and the general focus on the intimate relationship between language and culture. It is however not always clear exactly what the relationship between culture and language consists of, and documents seem to rely on different conceptions of 'culture' that alternate between largely monocultural (national) understandings of culture and multicultural approaches. In history and civics education the intercultural dimension of citizenship education has not really found its way into the official documents in the *gymnasium*. In the *folkeskole* the latest reform of civics and history is remarkable because it signifies a conceptual shift within democratic education of the Danish school system. It is the first instance within the official guidelines of the *folkeskole* where the Danish society is explicitly acknowledged as a multicultural society. And it is stated that this constitutes the basic socio-cultural precondition for acting as an active democratic citizen.

The official documents of the Danish education system highlight the fact that education is still generally nationally defined though challenged by intercultural, international and multicultural approaches to education defined by contemporary contexts. This is evident in the constant references to national contexts – notably 'Danish culture' – and in the preference for the term 'international' rather than 'intercultural' education. However, the reference to national belonging and identity is strongest in the *folkeskole*, and intercultural, transcultural and international dimensions of education are generally more highlighted in upper secondary education, especially in business and technical school.

Education for citizenship is connected partly explicitly, partly implicitly to different kind of politics of identity and belonging. The fusion of national belonging and democratic values form a hegemonic feature within the documents. In the case of the *Danish Government's Vision and Strategies for Improved Integration*, the intercultural dimension is connected first and foremost to relations between the Danish national majority community and immigrants from third world countries. As described in the document these relations bear an imprint of a fundamental socio-cultural conflict between the Danish 'we' and Muslims, even though this functions as the unspoken cultural premise in the text. Different or competing ideas of intercultural democratic values are mostly absent, even though potentially an option within some formulations, as for instance in history and civics guidelines of the *folkeskole*.

To conclude, the strength of Danish education at primary and secondary level is that democratic education and international dimensions of teaching and training are generally formally acknowledged in acts, aims and curricula. However, these are not widely conceptualised, which means that the discrepancies between national, international and intercultural aspects of democratic education can not easily be resolved. The inconsistencies with regard to international and intercultural education in official documents are embedded in an educational system that insists on a national basis for education while it is being challenged from the inside and the outside by various 'others'.